

SUPPORTING THE UNIVERSITY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Background

Higher education, specifically public higher education, is critical to the advancement of any state. Public higher education provides an affordable four-year college education, graduate degree programs, research support for community issues, and community college programs providing an entry to four-year colleges as well as job training and contributions to art, culture, and the quality of life. The University of the District of Columbia is the sole public institution of higher education in the District. As such, the District relies on UDC to fulfill its mission, provide quality higher education opportunities, and contribute to the economic well-being of the District.

The University is embarking on a critical period of transition. While the Board of Trustees of UDC conducts its search for a new President, there is a real sense of optimism and opportunity. The University is engaging in strategic planning and looking to expand programs to meet the diverse needs of the community. The University also is focused on identifying ways to modernize the campus and the school's operations. With this period of transition at hand, the time is ripe for the Administration and Board of Trustees to collaborate to support UDC in moving forward to meet the needs of District residents.

Priorities Expressed by UDC

Prior to engaging in strategic planning, UDC identified four priorities to assist them in enhancing their program:

- increased funding for facilities, for both operating costs and capital investment,
- independent financial and procurement authority,
- a request for a federal land transfer to provide the university with authority over the land on which the campus is located, and
- increased funding for faculty and administrator salaries, including administration for a new School of Nursing.

With the pending change in leadership and the on-going strategic planning process, these priorities may change or acquire a new focus.

The Role of UDC in Meeting the Needs of District Residents

As the only public university in the District of Columbia, UDC must be many things to many people. Critically, it must provide academic programming that prepares its students for successful careers or further education, and it must do so while ensuring financial responsibility and maintaining an awareness of the economic landscape of the District. UDC is proud of its open admissions policy, which brings the University the dual challenges of meeting its students where they are and providing support and remediation as necessary, while also providing a solid curriculum that enables students

to succeed and be competitive in the employment market and further education pursuits.

Because UDC plays such an important role in the District's education spectrum, the Administration is committed to strengthening the University and the opportunities it provides students and residents of the District. Specifically, the Administration envisions working with the Board of Trustees to provide support in at least three key areas.

1. *Expansion and strengthening of two-year degree programs and career and educational pathways*

Two-year degree programs and other programs traditionally offered by community colleges fill different needs for different students. Some students attend community colleges intending to then complete their education at a four-year institution. Other students attend community colleges specifically to attain an associate's degree, frequently in practical fields in which those students can begin their careers. These two goals are equally valid, but the capacity of UDC to support students pursuing these goals is currently limited.

The Administration looks forward to assisting UDC to develop a satellite campus east of the river offering quality remedial courses, general education, and associate's degree programs in high-need and high-interest careers. Such a satellite campus will improve District residents' access to higher education and enhance the employability and long-term financial stability of District residents. A campus offering two-year programs will also serve as a gateway to continued success in four-year programs at UDC or other universities, supporting the District's "Double the Numbers" initiative to improve bachelor's degree attainment rates.

2. *Quality of educational programming*

In part because of UDC's open admissions policy, the University must reach and educate students who may not be prepared fully for higher education. The open admissions policy is an asset, but it also requires UDC to support those students through bridge, remedial, and retention programs while maintaining the integrity of its university-level offerings. In support of the District's "Double the Numbers" initiative and as sound educational policy, UDC should provide a variety of supports including academic counseling, affordable child care, and financial aid and on-campus employment to enable students to complete their college education. The Administration will encourage District agencies to collaborate with UDC upon request to enhance the supports provided to students. Moreover, it will assist in the development of a full partnership between UDC and the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) to help assure that DCPS students receive a quality education at the

elementary and secondary level so that DCPS graduates are better prepared for the challenges of higher education at UDC and elsewhere. Such a partnership may involve enhanced teacher preparation and professional development capacity at UDC.

3. Improving the credibility of the University

Credibility in the eyes of the public it serves is an essential component of a quality educational institution. In the past, UDC has struggled to maintain a high degree of credibility in the District. As mentioned earlier, the leadership of the University is engaged in strategic planning to enhance the quality of UDC programs. Whether this leads to improvements in graduation rates or expansions in programs that residents of the District want and need, UDC must strategically publicize its successes as it achieves milestones in its self-improvement process. The Administration will work with the Board of Trustees to identify meaningful ways to assist in an image-building campaign for the University and to highlight significant improvements.

Recommendations

The Administration is committed to improving access to and the quality of educational opportunities for all District residents, including higher education, in order to meet the social and economic needs of the District. The relationship of the Administration with UDC therefore is critical to meeting these needs. As UDC works to provide important benefits to the District, the Administration offers the three areas of support described above:

1. expansion of two-year and workforce programs, and assisting UDC to develop a satellite campus east of the river;
2. strengthen program quality and encourage District agencies to collaborate with UDC upon request to enhance the supports provided to students; and
3. identify meaningful ways to assist in an image-building campaign for the University.

In addition, the Administration is committed to working with UDC's Board of Trustees and administration to develop a specific plan of action to address these and other critical issues, such as implementation of a Campus Master Plan, enhancement of the University's operational infrastructure, support for a private capital campaign, and strengthening of the Education, Allied Healthcare, and Hospitalities programs.